

## **HHS' SAMHSA ANNOUNCES NEW NAT'L SURVEY WHICH SHOWS THAT MORE THAN A QUARTER OF YOUTH AGED 12 TO 20 DRANK ALCOHOL IN THE PAST MONTH AND SAMHSA AND THE AD COUNCIL LAUNCH NAT'L UNDERAGE DRINKING PREVENTION CAMPAIGN**

Alcohol is the most widely used substance of abuse among America's youth. Alcohol contributes to the three leading causes of death among 12- to 20-year-olds (unintentional injury, homicide, and suicide). And research shows that those who start drinking before age 15 are six times more likely to have alcohol problems as adults than those who start drinking at age 21 or older.

More than a quarter of youth aged 12 to 20 (27.6 percent) drank alcohol in the past month, according to a survey by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The study shows that the underage drinking rates were as high as 40 percent in some states, such as North Dakota and Vermont.

In a major effort to combat the epidemic of underage drinking, SAMHSA and the Ad Council recently launched a new series of national public service advertisements (PSAs) to encourage parents to talk to their children about drinking alcohol at an early age. The campaign and study are being released in conjunction with Alcohol Awareness Month (April) and as part of the Surgeon General's "Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking." The PSAs are being distributed to media outlets throughout the country and will also be available online at the campaign's online fulfillment at: <http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov/>

The study also reveals that nationwide, approximately 8.6 percent of past-month drinkers aged 12-20 purchased their own alcohol the last time they drank. The rates were among the highest in Louisiana and the District of Columbia (18.8 percent) and among the lowest in Alaska (3.1 percent) and New Mexico (3.7 percent).

The data were drawn from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), using combined 2006-2008 data in estimates of past month alcohol use and self-purchase of alcohol among persons aged 12-20. The report will be available at: <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k10/180/SR180UADhtml.pdf>

"Prevention is the number one priority of SAMHSA, and reducing underage drinking is a key part of that effort. Underage drinking is a national crisis putting the lives of millions of Americans at risk as well as the futures of many of our youth," said SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. "The national educational campaign SAMHSA is undertaking with the Ad Council aims at bringing to bear the most effective weapon against underage drinking -- conversations between parents and their children."

The PSA campaign includes resources for parents that illustrate the short and long-term consequences of underage drinking and for tips on talking with their kids about alcohol. The site features an action plan that parents can personalize for their children to help start the conversation and sharable resources to send to family members, peers, and other adult influencers on their child's decision to drink. In an effort to further the reach of the campaign to parents online, a social media program will also kick off this week, in cooperation with Nickelodeon's Parents Connect (<http://www.parentsconnect.com/>).

In addition to these ads, SAMHSA and the Ad Council will launch culturally relevant PSAs designed specifically to reach parents in the Hispanic, Chinese and American Indian communities.

The Ad Council and SAMHSA first launched the national Underage Drinking Prevention campaign in November 2005. According to the Ad Council's tracking study, since the launch, there has been a significant increase in the number of parents who are extremely concerned about underage drinking with their level of concern now comparable to issues, including sex, drug use and academic performance.

SOURCE: SAMHSA eNetwork at: [enetwork@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:enetwork@samhsa.hhs.gov), March 25, 2010